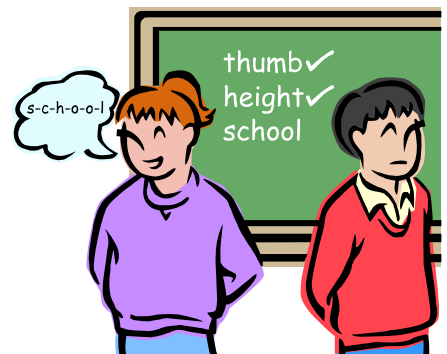




Basic Programme

Assessment for Learning

Session 1-7



Joanne Grima

EO Assessment for Learning

Contents

Assessment for Learning: A Focus on Teaching and Learning	Pg 3
7-Session Programme for Teachers	Pg 5
Schedule of Sessions	Pg 6
Session 1 Understanding what students know	Pg 7
Session 2 Learning Intentions	Pg 9
Session 3 Success Criteria	Pg 11
Session 4 Questioning Techniques	Pg 13
Session 5 Oral Feedback	Pg 17
Session 6 Written Feedback	Pg 19
Session 7 Self-Assessment and Peer- Assessment	Pg 22
Preparing lessons with Assessment for Learning in mind	Pg 25
Bibliography	Pg 29

Assessment for Learning: A Focus on Teaching and Learning

Raising standards of learning is a national priority, and learning is driven by what teachers and pupils do in classrooms. Teaching and learning has to be dynamic. Any activity undertaken by teachers and students that provides information or evidence of where students stand in their learning, qualifies as assessment. The feedback students give while learning provides a lot of insight into what needs to be modified in the teaching and learning activities. **Assessment for Learning (AfL) is when this evidence is really used to adapt the teaching to meet the needs of the students.**

AfL techniques help **all** kinds of students because it,

...is any assessment for which the first priority in its design and practice is to serve the purpose of promoting pupils' learning. (Black et al. 2002)

Assessment for Learning develops knowledge about the standard of performance that students are expected to reach. When used, students become able to do self-monitoring and self-reflection on the work they will be performing. This will in turn give them enough insight to understand, with the help of their teacher, what is the next step forward in their learning.

Assessment for Learning improves:

- ❑ pupils' scores in national tests and examinations
- ❑ metacognitive skills, including the capacity to learn how to learn.

AfL is a joint activity between teacher and pupil.

- ❑ It helps teachers identify what students have or have not learnt.
- ❑ It helps students increase their understanding of the standard expected, their progress towards it and what they need to do to reach it.

All this provides information to help teachers adjust their teaching, using five core strategies shown to have an impact on students' performance.

- 1. clarifying learning intentions and outcomes**
- 2. producing effective questions and tasks that elicit evidence of learning**
- 3. providing feedback that shows learners what the next step is**
- 4. learners to become responsible for their own learning**
- 5. learners to become resources for one another**

Assessment for Learning enhances learning for all types of students because it is there to build a bridge between what is known and what lies on the next step.

7-Session Programme for Teachers

This **Basic Programme for Assessment for Learning** is divided into 7 sessions that will be covered in a scholastic year. A session is discussed by teachers of the same subject every 4 weeks during a subject meeting. Consequently, teachers will have 4 weeks to implement the discussed skill and make it part of their everyday teaching experience. After 4 weeks the same teacher learning community meets and constructively discusses the techniques employed during the previous 4 weeks and give support to each other in making changes in their pedagogy. It is extremely important that the meeting always starts with a critical self-reflection on the techniques employed to collect information about the learning the learner is undergoing. The following questions ought to be considered before exploring the next session.

- 1. After incorporating this strategy in my teaching during the past four weeks, was my teaching different?**
- 2. Did this technique help in my teaching? Why?**
- 3. Did I feel at ease using this technique? Why am I good at this? How do I know it?**
- 3. Could I have done things differently and better?**
- 4. Did the learner benefit from this?**

Consequently, the teacher learning community proceeds to discuss the next session. Then again, the teachers will have another 4 weeks to implement what was discussed in that session but also continuing to implement what had been discussed in the preceding sessions. This will go on until all the sessions (by May) have been discussed and practiced.

This is a programme where all the teaching community works collaboratively, sharing good practices and where learning from one another happens through discussing pedagogical practices.

Schedule of Sessions

Scholastic Year 2010-2011	
Basic Programme of Assessment for Learning	
Month and Session number	Practice
October: 1	Understanding what students know
November: 2	Learning Intentions
December: 3	Success Criteria
February: 4	Effective Questioning Techniques
March: 5	Oral feedback
April: 6	Written feedback
May: 7	Promoting Self-Assessment & Peer-Assessment

Session 1

Understanding what students know

Before starting to teach a new topic or concept, we need to become aware of what are the pupils' perceptions on the subject. Students bring with them a baggage of information which sometimes may be right but other times can be full of misconceptions. It is therefore logical to start off by using techniques that elicit this information which will provide the background about what the student really knows already and what needs to be learnt or modified in his/her conceptual frameworks.



In so doing, we will be able to adapt our teaching to meet our learners' needs. These needs may vary from one pupil to another. If pupils are not allowed to talk about what they know, teachers will never know exactly what difficulties their pupils have but will only be able to do assumptions which sometimes may not be correct. Consequently, we have to allow our **students to speak while we listen.**

It is very important that to induce the students to speak we have to associate the concept that will be explained during the lesson to a real life situation or one that they have experienced. When the students feel that what they will be learning is already a past experience or an experience they might have outside the school, they will be more open to learn and to speak about what they know. The aptitude towards learning will then be better. Rich questions asked at this stage have to induce students to speak since they are formulated in a way that require an explanation. Students' talk will reveal rich evidence of their understanding or partly formed ideas. Thought-provoking questions will create an adequately challenging environment that will motivate the students to learn.

Techniques that can be used	Mark what you will try out
Brainstorming	
Questioning	
Survey	
Concept Mapping	
Mind web	
Discussion	
Short test	
Evaluate written work done at home or at school	

Comments:

Session 2

Learning Intentions



Do the students really know and understand what they have to learn during **each** lesson?

Students need to know the purpose of every lesson and this can only happen if the teacher communicates explicitly what the learning intentions are. When this does not happen, the students may become confused at how to go about the task or learning since they would not know where they are being taken during that particular lesson. It is therefore vital that learning intentions are shared with the students for every lesson and repeated every so often to keep the students focused and to remind him/her where we intend to go.

Learning intentions need to be:

- **CLEAR** and **UNAMBIGUOUS**
- **EXPLAINED** to the students in a way that makes sense to them
- **WRITTEN** on paper or board so as to be easily reviewed by students

The task or activity chosen for the lesson has to match the learning intention and not be an end in itself. The task or activity will be useless if it does not help in the achievement of the learning intention.

WALT	
We Are Learning To.....	Are students able to answer this question?
WILF	
What I'm Looking For.....	Is this clear in your mind?

How can Learning Intentions be Displayed	Which one do you intend using?
1. Written on the white board and left there for the whole lesson.	
2. Previously prepared and written on a sheet of paper and handed in to students	

Let us become more conscious about these:	Yes	No
Do I know what are learning intentions of every lesson?		
Are they clear enough?		
Are they known by the students?		
Do they have equal weighting?		
Are there too many learning intentions?		
Can this be a source of confusion?		
Do these intentions relate to what has previously been learnt?		

One might argue that this process is time consuming. However, once the students have a clear objective in mind, they will know what is expected of them to succeed. They will be sure of what is in the teacher's mind and will not have to try and guess where the teacher is taking them in their learning through that lesson.

Before you get in the car, you have a clear destination in mind. This will make it easier for you to choose the right and maybe shortest way to arrive to that place. If you get in the car without a clear destination, you will start roaming about and maybe never get anywhere. So isn't it better to show the students what is your aim for that lesson?

Comments:

Session 3

Success Criteria

The success criteria are those short statements that reveal on what grounds a student will be assessed. These have to be directly linked to the learning intentions.



How to create the success criteria:

Take one learning intention at a time and ask yourself how you will be able to understand whether it has been reached by the students. This answer (the success criteria) has to be disclosed to the students. The criteria need to be told to the students or written down on the board. Students need to understand where they have difficulties when they compare what they have achieved against the listed success criteria. Students need to realise when they have reached the aim of the lesson and therefore they can then move on to a next step in their learning.

To cater for the different abilities of the students in class, a teacher might have similar learning intentions for all but different success criteria according to the different levels of the students in class.

The teacher may ask the students:

How will we know that the learning intention of today's lesson has been achieved?

The students can come up with the **success criteria** themselves. This makes students absolutely sure about the criteria that are going to be used to judge their work. When students know the success criteria they can be self-evaluative while they are learning or while they are performing the task since they have the criteria with what to compare.

Importance of Success Criteria...	Yes or No
Will the students know when they arrive to the established target?	
Do we take it for granted that students understand on what grounds we shall judge their work?	
While we are teaching, do we have clear success criteria on which we shall assess the students?	
Are we able to verbalise these criteria and disclose them to our students at the beginning of every lesson?	
Are these criteria clear and unambiguous?	
Are the success criteria so focused that the students can do self-monitoring of their learning process?	

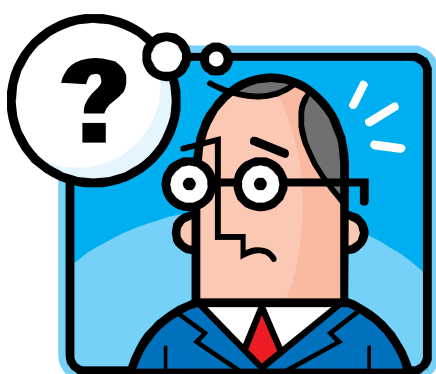
If the success criteria are written down, it would be even better as students will be able to do self-monitoring. They will just have to take a look at the success criteria to focus their learning.

Comments:

Session 4

Effective Questioning Techniques

We ask several questions to students. However, most of these are closed unproductive questions. This means that we already have a predetermined answer in our mind and what the students say has to match our thoughts otherwise we will consider their answer incorrect. Most of these questions are of the recall type where facts have to be remembered.

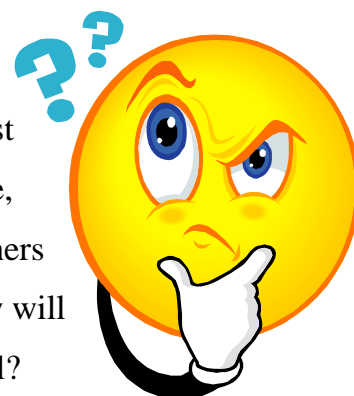


We should then consider the usage of more open questions which allow a range of correct responses. Such questions are more challenging; for us since we have to be prepared with them and for the students because they will be required to think. Such questions bring students to terms with what they are understanding and the concepts they are forming on the topic being tackled. This will enable students to think beyond what is given and provided by us.

When making use of these higher order question, students need to be given more time to answer. This wait time has to be of around five seconds. This is not easy. So we have to be conscious about it and do it. During that time students would be processing the question and formulating the answer.

Students usually leave the answering of questions to the few most able students in class or else when we use a 'hands up' technique, only those that are sure of the answer put up their hand as the others would not want to risk. What about the rest of the students? How will we know that these students have grasped the concept or the skill?

Therefore avoid the hands up technique and give everybody an opportunity to answer. The 'do not forget anybody' strategy works better.





Strategies for effective questioning taken from *Talking in Class*, a leaflet produced by the National Literacy Strategy.

How to get students to talk the talk	The strategy I intend to use is:
Invite students to elaborate.	
Repeat what the student said in your own words to show him/her what you understood from his/her explanation.	
Use body language to show what you think of answer given.	
Make a personal contribution from your own experience to explain better.	
Clarify ideas by listening to students' different viewpoints.	
Encourage students to make suggestions or build on your suggestions.	
Encourage students to reflect and explore the topic and not rely on the information supplied by you.	
Encourage students to offer their own information and discuss the teacher's contribution.	
Encourage pupils to explore ideas and understand that uncertainty is a normal stage in the thinking process.	



All **types of questions** are important and all need to be present for a lesson to be effective. Questions can be of the following type:

Types of questions	Mark those you use:
<p>Literal Questions</p> <p>Simple recall: Who, Where, When, What</p>	
<p>Application Questions</p> <p>Can you think of another situation similar to this?</p> <p>Do you know of another story that deals with the same issues?</p> <p>Do you know where else this can be used?</p>	
<p>Analytical Questions</p> <p>What makes you think that?</p> <p>Can you support your view with evidence?</p> <p>Are there familiar patterns you notice?</p> <p>Why do you think this was written/given in such a way?</p> <p>Why did you decide to do it in such a way?</p>	
<p>Synthesis Questions</p> <p>What is your opinion?</p> <p>What evidence do you have to support your view?</p> <p>Given what you know about... what do you think?</p> <p>If you were.... what would you think?</p>	
<p>Evaluation Questions</p> <p>What makes this ... successful?</p> <p>Does it work if done in another way?</p> <p>Which is better and why?</p>	

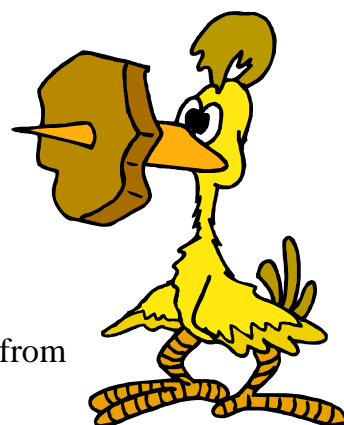
While **students are working** we have to go round and ask them questions like

- ❑ Can you explain what you are doing?
- ❑ Why did you decide to use this method?
- ❑ What do you mean by...?
- ❑ Do you think this could be done in another way?
- ❑ Do you think there is any pattern in what you are doing?



When **students are stuck** we have to use questions like:

- ❑ Can you try to say it in your own words and then together we will identify the difficulty?
- ❑ Can you tell me what you have done so far and why you did it in such a way?
- ❑ Do you think it can be worked out in another way?
- ❑ Shall we try to see what your peer is doing differently from you?



At **the end** we can ask questions like:

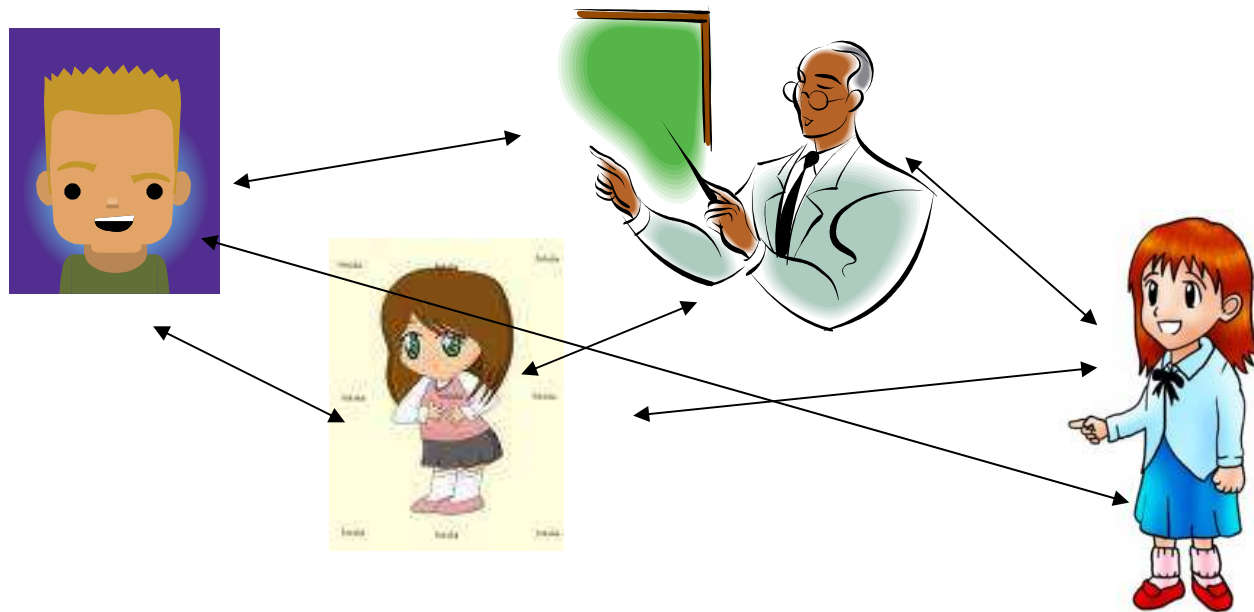
- ❑ How did you get to that answer?
- ❑ What could you try next?
- ❑ What if you could only use...?
- ❑ How did you check it?

Comments:

Session 5

Oral Feedback

‘Teachers should be aware of the impact that comments ,marks, and grades can have on learners’ confidence and enthusiasm and should be as constructive as possible in the feedback that they give.’ (Assessment Reform Group, 2002)



Feedback is **fundamental**. It gives the opportunity to students to improve in their learning. Feedback has to be from

- teacher to student
- student to teacher
- student to student

When the student answers a question, the teacher is in a position to reflect on whether the strategy adopted to teach a topic was the right one or if it needs to be modified to ensure that learning happens.

When students give feedback to other students they use a language that does not take anything for granted since they are round about at the same level. This technique gives the opportunity to those who have a difficulty in understanding the teacher to make sense of what is being said. It also gives the possibility to who is explaining to



verbalise what he/she has understood during the lesson. This will even give more feedback to the teacher.

Becoming **Conscious** of what students perceive when we give them oral feedback:

How is my tone of voice when I speak to students?

What kind of body language are the students observing while I am speaking to them?

These two things can lead the student to either feel at ease, talk or ask questions or feel distressed and keep all the difficulties and misconceptions to one's self.

Where do I stand?			
Do I pull faces?		Do I nod to express approval?	
Do I stare hard?		Do I make eye contact?	
Do I frequently click my fingers?		Do I smile or laugh with the students?	
Do I make disapproving noises?		Am I approachable by all?	

Giving Good Oral Feedback. Do I ...?	
1. focus on the student's work not on the person	
2. state specific ways on how the work can be improved	
3. compare the work the student produced with what was previously done	
4. do it all along the activity	
5. give critically constructive feedback	
6. use comments that push the learning forward	
7. use a language that does not intimidate the students	
8. consider all the students' comments and give constructive feedback	
9. give feedback focused on the learning intentions explained at the beginning	

Comments:

Session 6

Written Feedback

'It is the nature, rather than the amount, that is critical when giving pupils feedback on both oral and written feedback'. (Black 2004)

What kind of written feedback do I make use of?

- Grades
- Comments
- Both



Way to Go!



A numerical mark does not tell the students what needs to be improved in their work and therefore an opportunity to enhance their learning is lost. When a comment is written next to the grade, students tend to ignore the comment and all the corrections the teacher does. The mark becomes a measure of their ability. This leads to obvious questions....

From all these corrections, did the students learn anything or will I be correcting the same mistakes next time?

Can I do things differently to change this and get better results?



When correcting work **focus only on the learning intentions.**

Do not correct mistakes that are not part of the learning intention to avoid confusion and to allow students to focus their learning. This is difficult to do! You may start off by

underlining or putting a dot near the incorrect parts/words/sums, but do not write it correctly for the students. Let them do it! **HOW SHALL WE GO ABOUT IT?**

Give them the correct advice that would lead them to correct their mistakes. This advice has to be concordant with the learning intention. The advice should be a very

short piece of information about where the students achieved success and where they could improve against the learning intention. **THIS IS NOT ENOUGH!**

The work should go back to the student who must be given time to do the asked changes. The work will then go back to the teacher who will correct it and give another advice on what can be done next to enhance learning. If the teacher wants he/she can now give marks.

Comments need to:

- Begin with what has been a success
- Show what needs to be improved
- Give advice on how this improvement can be achieved



The feedback given has to cause thinking and students have to be given time to act accordingly. We must remember that we are **TEACHING THE STUDENTS NOT THE CONTENT**. We can say that a topic is done when we obtain evidence from the students that learning has actually taken place. The advice has to be a prompt.

Reminder prompt: most suitable for the brighter students as it reminds them of the learning intention. Most students need more support than just this.

Explain, Describe how, Write more, Try out....

Scaffolded Prompt: most suitable for students who need more support. A question or a directive or an unfinished sentence can do the job well.

a) Focus on specifics: Ask a question on a specific thing that went wrong.

b) Delve: Ask questions that prompt students to tell more about a specific thing.

Example prompt: Suitable for all kind of students especially those below average or younger students, as it gives an example of how the final product should like when the necessary amendments are made.

The feedback given should stimulate the student to improve. It should be challenging enough to motivate the students to learn. Visible improvements will increase the students' self-esteem.

What am I doing?	Yes	No
Am I writing comments?		
Am I giving grades?		
Do my comments differentiate between students?		
Does my marking offer advice on how work could be improved?		
Was I too generous and unfocused when correcting work?		
Are my comments increasing the students' self-esteem?		
Are my comments pushing the learning forward?		

Comments:

Session 7

Promoting Self-Assessment and Peer-Assessment



Self-Assessment

Many studies show significant progress made by children who have been trained to be self-evaluative. At the end of every lesson students are asked to produce reflective comments about their learning, followed by a teacher's summary, unravelling misconceptions that might have been created and providing links with future learning.

Self-evaluation has to be linked with the learning intentions and this will lead to student progress, more persistence and a higher self-esteem from the students' part.

Training students to be self-evaluative

1. Explain why a self-evaluation is needed.

Significant progress is made by students who are self-evaluative. When they compare their learning against the learning intentions, they understand where they stand in their learning. Then they can ask the necessary questions to move forward.

2. Recap the learning intention a number of times during the lesson.
3. Be prepared with a number of questions for the end of the lesson.

What did you find most difficult to learn?

What didn't you understand at all?

Is there something which you are still unsure about?

Is there anything you need to know more about?



4. Give students some thinking time (15-30 seconds) to answer the above questions.
5. Use different approaches to get the answers for the above questions

Whole class responses, paired-responses, group responses.

Let us become more conscious about:	Yes	No
Were students given enough time to think?		
Were students given time to reflect on their learning?		
Were they given time to explain themselves and thus hear what they have learnt?		
Were students given the opportunity to mark their own work?		
Were they given time to identify the next step in their learning and their intention on how they might close the gap?		

‘Independent learners have the ability to seek out and gain new skills, new knowledge and new understandings. They are able to engage I self-reflection and to identify the next steps in their learning. Teachers should equip learners with the desire and the capacity to take charge of their learning through developing the skills of self-assessment.’ (Assessment Reform Group, 2002)

Peer-Assessment

When we became teachers and started verbalising our knowledge to make it accessible to the students, we felt how much this procedure helped us to really understand the subject well. Allowing the students to



verbalise their knowledge about a topic will give them insight about what they know, what they do not know and what needs improvement. Therefore it is of extreme importance that teachers give space and time for students to speak about the topic in question.

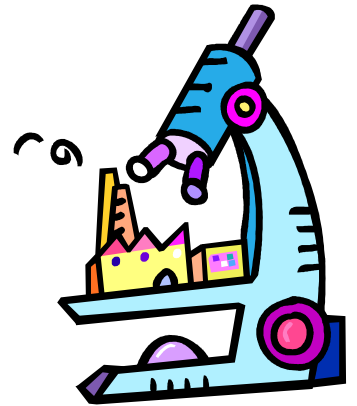


The other students need to know that they will be asked whether they agree or not with the interpretation given by their peer and why. They will be asked to explain and improve on what has been said or make the necessary amendments.

Peer-assessment is the ability to assess the work of others, whether it is written, spoken, painted, or any other practical piece of work. Students will be able to perform peer-assessment only if the teacher has given them clearly stated success criteria against which they can perform assessment.

Skills which form the basis of peer-assessment:

- Students have to learn to observe
- Students have to learn to form an opinion
- Students have to know **why** they have formed that opinion



Did I use this practice?

Did the students listen to each other in whole class discussions?

Were students given the opportunity to mark each other's work?

Were they able to give useful comments on how their peers could improve?

Comments:

Preparing lessons with Assessment for Learning in mind

Topic	Name the topic as stated in the syllabus. It may take a number of lessons for the topic to be understood and learnt by the students.
Understanding what the student knows	Give the students the opportunity to speak about what they know. This is the time for the teacher to listen attentively.
Learning Intentions	Tell the students the learning intention/s of the lesson. This has to be done for every lesson. It needs to be short, specific and explained. Learning will happen faster.
Success Criteria	Ask Yourself: What do I have to perceive to understand that the student has reached the learning intention? Explain this to the students at the beginning of the lesson so that they will be able to monitor their learning and ask you questions accordingly.
Activity with questions	Prepare an activity that challenges the different abilities present in class. This will lead to motivated students. Preparing the proper challenge for the correct ability creates an environment conducive to learning without any waste of time. If high achievers reach the intention before some others, they have to be stretched in their learning by doing another activity. Simply waiting for the rest creates frustration. If low achievers need more advice and feedback, now is the time to give them that individual attention.
Feedback	Oral feedback needs to be in prompts that advice students towards the next step in reaching the learning intention. Written feedback will be productive if it takes the form of a comment that shows how the work can be improved.

	The comment needs to be in relation to achieving the learning intention better.
Self- Assessment	During the lesson the students are reminded of the success criteria and asked where they think they stand and where they think more help is needed.
Peer-Assessment	All along the lesson the questions asked by the students are bounced to other students so that together students reach the learning intention. Students are a useful resource for one another.

Everything works somewhere and nothing works everywhere. The questions is: Under what conditions does this work?

For further assistance contact Ms Joanne Grima EO Assessment for Learning

joanne-rita.grima@gov.mt

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